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OTHER MATTERS

ACC statement to the Commission on Sustainable Development

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) at its first regular session of 1995 adopted the following statement to the Commission on Sustainable Development:

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) reaffirms its commitment to Agenda 21 and to support for the Commission on Sustainable Development. It wishes to reiterate that new and additional financing remains a critical condition for the successful implementation of Agenda 21. It underscores the need for greater balance between development and environmental aspects in the follow-up processes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). 1/ It welcomes the recent efforts of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) in accordance with the conclusions of ACC at its second regular session of 1994, to move from a reporting stage to a more operational and action-oriented approach in the response of the United Nations system to Agenda 21.

2. ACC is actively engaged, through IACSD, in formulating and developing specific proposals for joint programmes and initiatives within the framework of Agenda 21. Specifically, following up on a decision taken by IACSD at its fourth session, UNIDO, in cooperation with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, organized a Round Table on Technology Transfer, Cooperation and Capacity-Building, which was held from 6 to 8 February 1995 with the objective of gaining donor country support for inter-agency and intersectoral strategies for the

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transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Representatives of developing countries, donor Governments, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participated. A forerunner of this initiative is the recently launched UNIDO/UNEP National Cleaner Production Centres Programme, which is currently being introduced in seven developing countries.

3. Another successful joint effort is the World Climate Programme. Led by WMO, UNEP, UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), FAO, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and other relevant organizations are preparing an integrated proposal to Governments for additional funding for the Programme. In addition, in response to chapter 19 of Agenda 21, an Inter-organizational Programme on the Sound Management of Chemicals is being established, with the participation of WHO, UNEP, ILO, FAO, UNIDO and OECD. The agreed memorandum of understanding is currently being circulated for signature. ACC urges all countries, in particular donor countries, to actively support these joint initiatives, which can go far in mobilizing the resources necessary to implement Agenda 21.

4. Additional instances of United Nations system coordination and joint action in the area of sustainable development, discussed at the most recent session of IACSD (1-3 February 1995), include a Global Water Assessment Task Force, a consultative mechanism for information exchange on environmentally sound technologies and system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small island Developing States. Furthermore, the system has joined efforts in the development of a core set of indicators for sustainable development.

5. ACC shares the concerns raised by various intergovernmental bodies that the UNCED follow-up process needs to better address the development dimension of Agenda 21. There is also concern that the process might be concentrating excessively on meetings and reporting rather than on concrete achievements at the national level. In this regard, ACC emphasized the importance of United Nations system follow-up to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought for translating Agenda 21 into meaningful action for poverty alleviation and environmental conservation at the local level.

6. Regarding the substantive aspects of the work of the United Nations system in the Commission on Sustainable Development, ACC fully supports the participation of task managers in the Commission itself and its ad hoc working groups and in the inter-sessional activities of the Commission, which is beneficial to both organizations of the United Nations system and Governments. It is expected that new initiatives will strengthen working arrangements among organizations of the United Nations system and both donor and recipient Governments and will lead to additional financial support for the implementation of Agenda 21.

7. The agencies and programmes of the United Nations system recognize the importance of focusing on the formulation of sustainable development strategies at the national level in support of country-driven processes. They have therefore joined efforts to analyse how sectoral strategies related to the mandates of specific agencies can best contribute to and support the overall sustainable development strategies recommended in Agenda 21. These efforts will

give direction to the assistance provided by the United Nations system to Governments in support of national goals and priorities.

8. Issues currently under consideration in the IACSD include the possible streamlining of reporting requirements. ACC welcomes initiatives aimed at:

(a) The streamlining of reporting by Governments to the United Nations system, including reporting in relation to conventions and treaties;

(b) The streamlining of reports to the various governing bodies in relation to the implementation of Agenda 21 or to sustainable development issues at large.

9. ACC is of the opinion that the Commission on Sustainable Development has an important role to play in this field, including with regard to streamlining its own reporting requirements, as the current arrangements seem to overstretch the capacities of both Governments and the United Nations system and carry the risk of duplication. It is felt that the need for an integrated approach at the national level, driven by national priorities, must be the starting-point in a discussion on the streamlining of reporting requirements.

10. In conclusion, it may be stated that the implementation of Agenda 21 has given rise to new and stimulating means of cooperation among organizations of the United Nations system and has also led to new opportunities for direct assistance and collaboration with national Governments, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Notes

1/ See also para. 5 of the report of the IACSD on its fourth session (ACC/1994/17).